



ABN E-NEWS

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New Rules Took Effect January 5

Peggy Sellers Benson, RN, MSHA, MSN, NE-BC

As 2016 drew to a close, the Board conducted a routine review of the ABN Administrative Code and made a number of rule changes. The most significant changes occurred in a comprehensive revision of Chapter 3, "Nursing Education Programs." I would like to take a moment of your time to highlight a few of the education revisions.

From the Board's perspective, the most impactful addition is the requirement that all programs achieve national nursing program accreditation by January 2022. In recent years, the United States has seen a proliferation of new education programs and it is vital to our mission of public protection that we take step to ensure that every program is offering substantial rigor as it trains the nurses of tomorrow.

The new education rules also eliminate the term "provisional approval" for nursing education programs, which should alleviate some concerns for prospective employers of new graduates, and streamline the review and correction processes for programs with identified deficiencies, among numerous other updates to keep our rules aligned to current trends in nursing education.

While less high profile than the education revisions, changes made to Chapters 4, "Licensure," and 5, "Advanced Practice Nursing Collaborative Practice," of the ABN Administrative Code also took effect on January 5. The revisions simplify the process by which nurses deployed with the military maintain licensure, eliminate repetitive fees to retire a nursing license, ensure that all new licensees take ABN's mandatory CE class, and clarify that CRNPs and CNMs are allowed to prescribe antibiotics as part of an Expedited Partner Therapy protocol for the control of sexually-transmitted diseases. I encourage you to review the current Administrative Code on the [Board's website](#).

A Brief Look at ABN's 2017 Legislative Program

Honor L. Ingels

Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer

With the 2017 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature set to convene in early February, the Alabama Board of Nursing is proposing four pieces of legislation designed to enhance our ability to ensure safe nursing practice and protect the public. While the Board has rarely put forth bills in the past, these four are vital to our core mission. Following is a brief overview of each:

Revisions to Nurse Practice Act Article V: "Advanced Practice Nursing"

At the January 2017 meeting, the Board approved a number of proposed changes to the Alabama Nurse Practice Act (NPA) Article 5, which grants the ABN authority to approve and regulate practice for CRNPs, CNMs, CNSs, and CRNAs. The proposal is largely designed to bring the NPA as closely in line with the Consensus Model as possible, in light of the current CRNP/CNM collaborative practice requirements, which are unlikely to change in the near future.

While the majority of these revisions, such as changing the title "Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner" to "Certified Nurse Practitioner," are simply aligning the language Alabama law to national trends, the bill would make two significant policy changes. The first of these would require the Board to approve graduate programs for advanced practice education, much as we currently approve pre-licensure programs for LPNs and RNs. This requirement is necessary to ensure that every Alabama advanced practice graduate student is educated in a program that provides the appropriate level of rigor for his or her chosen practice field.

A second significant policy change would allow CNSs the option of entering collaborative practice with physicians, where it is appropriate to their practice settings and functions. The bill does not require collaborative practice for any CNS, as many of these advanced practice nurses work in settings where collaboration is would be unnecessary. It is also important to note that the bill makes clear that even CNSs in collaborative practice will not perform the functions of nurse practitioners or nurse midwives.

Peace Officer Authority for ABN

The Board has also approved a proposal which would grant the ABN's investigators the powers of peace officers for purposes of investigating complaints against licensees. The ABN currently employs an excellent and qualified investigative staff, but, while each of our investigators is former member of a law enforcement agency such as a local police department, as ABN employees, they are not designated as law enforcement officers. This creates a number of difficulties.

In particular, many designated sworn law enforcement agencies will not share investigative files with non-sworn personnel. The practical effect of this is that the ABN may not learn for months or even years that a nurse has been engaging in criminal or other activity that might have required discipline against the nurse's license. As this current arrangement directly hinders the Board's primary missions of ensuring safe nursing practice and protecting the public, it has been identified by both the Board and the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts as a significant issue that needs to be addressed.

This bill also clarifies that the Board has the authority to expunge certain older and relatively minor disciplinary actions from a nurse's record. This would create a path for an individual who, for instance, made a mistake as a young nurse and returned to practice safely and within the rules to move forward without carrying an old public action on her record for life.

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A Brief Look at ABN's 2017 Legislative Program

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Allowing Recent Graduates to Participate in the Advanced Practice Loan Repayment Program

Many of our licensees are familiar with the Advanced Practice Loan Repayment Program, which the Legislature created during the 2016 Regular Session. The Program is intended to expand access to health care in rural Alabama by granting loans to prospective CRNPs, CNMs, and CRNAs who agree to work in a rural area for a specified amount of time following graduation.

We are very appreciative of the leadership shown by Governor Bentley and the bill's sponsors, Representative April Weaver and Senator Greg Reid, in putting forth the original Loan Repayment Program, there is room for an improvement that should significantly impact the quality of patient care. Though the program was meant to be available to current and future students, as well as recent graduates, a minor flaw in the drafting of the bill led to an opinion from the Alabama Attorney General's office which bars those recent graduates from participating.

The Board's third piece of legislation would address this problem by amending the existing program to open up the program to advanced practice nurses who graduated from their program's within five years prior to the current loan cycle. We feel that this will not only expand access to the Program, but should have a positive impact on the caliber of care available to rural patients by placing a greater number of seasoned and experienced advanced practice nurses in their local areas.

Technical Regulatory Changes to the Nurse Practice Act

Finally, the Board is proposing a bill that is likely to draw less attention from Alabama nurses, but is no less important to the vital functions the Legislature created the Board to perform. This simple bill, which is modeled on language in the statutes of a number of other Alabama regulatory boards, clarifies that the Board is the state's designated authority for making rules and determinations related to nursing practice and the nursing profession. The intent is to ensure that individuals who either currently serve on the Board or may choose to do so in the future are not subject to lawsuits for actions taken in the ordinary and appropriate performance of their duties as members of the Board.

ABN Welcomes New Board Members for 2017

Effective January 1, 2017, Governor Bentley appointed two new members to the Alabama Board of Nursing.



Richard O. Foote, RN, MSN, MA, CEN

A native of Pensacola, Florida, Lt. Col. Foote holds BSN and MSN degrees from Spring Hill College, as well as a Masters of Military Operational Art (MA) degree from Air University, Maxwell AFB. He has enjoyed a long and distinguished career as both an RN in the private sector and a member of the US Armed Forces, first with the US Navy Reserve and, since 2004, the US Air Force Reserve.

A recipient of numerous nursing and military honors, Lt. Col. Foote is a member of the National Eagle Scout Association, the Reserve Officer Association, the Air Force Association, Emergency Nurses Association, the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, and Sigma Theta Tau. He presently serves as Chief Nurse Executive of the 514th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron and Consultant for Pain Management with the Air Force Reserve.

Richard has been a Director of multiple departments, to include progressive care, pediatrics, cardiac care, and the emergency department. Richard has been a Director of Nursing Operations and currently serves as the Director of Nursing Services for Mitchell Cancer Institutes in Mobile, Alabama.

Lt. Col. Foote serves in a Nursing Practice position on the Board. His current term expires December 31, 2020.



Cynthia Buford, LPN

A graduate of Shelton State Community College, Ms. Buford has been a Licensed Practical Nurse since 1984. She has extensive experience in the field, in a number of practice settings. Ms. Buford currently serves as President of Chapter 6 of the Licensed Practical Nurse Association of Alabama (LPNAA) and State Education Chairperson of the LPNAA. She presently is employed as the Employee Health Nurse at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center.

Ms. Buford serves in an LPNAA position on the Board. Her current term expires December 31, 2020.

Lt. Col. Foote replaces Amy Price, RN, MSN, on the Board, while Ms. Buford takes the position vacated by the expiration of the term of Melissa Bullard, LPN. Both Ms. Price and Ms. Bullard served with distinction and dedication and we know that their successors will, as well. Please join us in thanking these four nurses for their years of service to the nursing profession and Alabama patients.